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"WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

JEWISH VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY

...ing a Lecture delivered 1886, at a Christian Literary
Society in London, under the Chairmanship of
Joseph Jacobs, M.A., Cambridge.

BY

OSWALD JOHN SIMON,

Balliol College, Oxford.

*Author of "The World and the Cloister," "Faith
and Experience," &c., &c.*

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TO

C. G. MONTEFIORE

WHOSE SCHOLARLY COMMENTARY ON THE
SYNOPTIC GOSPELS IS LARGELY IN ACCORD
WITH THE VIEWS OF THIS PAMPHLET.

WITH DEEP AFFECTION

O. J. S.

May, 1911.

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“WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?”

OR

A JEWISH VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY

OSWALD JOHN SIMON

(formerly of Balliol College, Oxford).

In politics it is not always easy to perceive the exact cause of events, or the consequences of them. Few politicians are gifted with that breadth of view which is necessary to enable them to assign to their right causes the incidents in political history. Difficult, however, as this mental process is in the sphere of politics, it is more difficult in the domain of Philosophy and Religion. In the latter province of thought, greater prejudices impede investigation, and prejudices of a kind more subtle and deeply rooted than those which operate against true political insight. It is sometimes part of a creed to believe that a certain moral result was the issue of a given chain of events. And it is often a condition of a religious communion to deny to certain factors the place that might be assigned to them in the history of civilization. Thus it arises that two persons, of equal capacity and sincerity, will select different reasons for the development of civili-

zation, possibly the one insisting upon a circumstance as a mainspring which the other would find it part of his mental constitution to deny. This unfortunate condition of things, in the relations of one religious system to another, is pregnant with harm to the solution of problems that most concern human progress, as well as to the harmony of human intercourse. It is not uncommon, when two persons of different religious traditions are conversing about the progress of human Society, for one to say to the other, "of course we have such different stand-points that it is impossible to proceed together beyond a certain reach." The great advantage which men of Science have over Moralists is that they start on their journey of research without let or hindrance. Is it too much to hope from the progress of culture that the time is not distant when persons of totally opposite training in religion may look into each other's experiences, with a vision as clear and unshaded as that which leads the student of natural science to discoveries which astonish and delight mankind? We might suppose an examination of this kind, conducted by a cultivated Bhuddist and a well read Parsee, surveying together, not only the antecedence of their own religious histories, but looking beyond into the depth of European culture, with the will and intention to find out what, in truth, are the principles known to any section of mankind which have done most for human good and which are, therefore, likely to accomplish the greatest happiness for the greatest number. For purposes of illustration, it is invariably best to choose examples nearest home. An Englishman, writing in his own tongue, for readers of his own nationality, will best secure his illustrations by pointing to cases that are familiar to every educated Englishman. Few people, in this island

of ours, profess to know very much about the ancient and picturesque religions of Asia, although Professor Max Müller and Monier Williams have thrown much light upon the subject ; perhaps there are not fifty men in any English or Scotch University who could feel that they were capable exponents of the Asiatic religions.

Whenever I employ the term Religion in the course of this Lecture, I would wish my readers to understand the exact meaning I intend it to convey, and in no instance to confound it with theology or ecclesiasticism. I use the word in a broad sense that may be understood by every race and system of thought. I mean by it no creed, but the simple idea, more or less developed in various systems ; that there is a parental relation of the Supreme Being to the human family. For my purpose I must regard religion as a single principle in human thought, a single factor in human culture—just like the words, logic, natural science or mathematics, it will be the same in every tongue and to every mind. As there is one logic, one mathematics, etc., so there is, in the sense in which I shall refer to it, one religion. Fully sensible of the multifarious forms in which it is presented, and the apparently opposing evidence on which it is said to rest ; I cannot conceive of a plurality of religions. any more that I can suppose that there are several logics. It is one thing by itself necessary to the happiness of mankind, just as logic is another necessary to the art of reasoning. These different factors were suggested by different members of the human race ; and particular groups of people seem to have had the special charge allotted to them of teaching the world the one and the other. Human development is gradual, and one set of truths after another has slowly crept in upon human thought. Many persons use words like these, with a dif-

ferent meaning. Excellent people often say there is only one religion; by which they mean that their particular theology is the only one that is true, or that it is the best, and the terms theology and religion are inconveniently confused. Seeing how common it is to say that, there is only one religion; and that the statement conveys exactly what I do not mean when I say it, I have thought it necessary to state briefly my own definition of the term. If I allude to heathendom, I mean only such peoples who have not yet perceived the parental relation of the Supreme Being to the human family. But I wish to convey no more the idea of opprobrium than I would if I alluded to persons who were not yet acquainted with the principles of logic. A religious person means one who, by some means or other, is conscious of the parental relation of the Supreme Being to mankind. The degrees of religion relate to the measure of influence which that principle has obtained in the particular case. The reason why I presume to describe religion as the first principle in importance, in the structure of civilization, is because it is only one which has for its immediate logical outcome the doctrine of human brotherhood. Now as the antithesis to civilization is human discord, the chief test of a civilized commonwealth is the harmony of the social relations. The world has so far progressed in civilization as men and nations live in harmony. Inasmuch as there is less strife in the year 1886 than in the years of previous epochs, we are more civilized now than we were then. Moreover, in so far as there is, at this moment, strife among nations, we are less civilized than we may become. Every measure, therefore, which secures the basis of liberty, and thus shatters the foundations of enmity, increases civilization.

We all know what the world owes to those races

who first taught logic, mathematics and art. We can easily assign to them the place of honor in the history of human intellect, but what place shall we give to those to whom we owe this greatest of all factors in civilization? And what personality in particular stands out as having contributed most to the setting of that corner-stone in human welfare? The most devout men of all nations would naturally ascribe the blessings of the world to Divine Providence, and Christian men, if they wanted a name in particular, would mention the Founder of their religion, who, they would say, was the human aspect of the Divine.

Such answers would not satisfy the strict inquiry which I have described, nor could they be valid, for in the one case it would be no answer to the question of men and race to mention God, and it would be no more correct to mention another name, if that other name is understood to be synonymous with the name of God. Besides, to have a satisfactory answer, it is desirable that it shall be one upon which there can be no difference of opinion; no name suggested by the bias of race or creed would carry sufficient guarantee that it was the right one. Here comes the difficulty of a man stepping out, for a moment, from that cavern which, more or less, overshadows the best intellects, even in the world of letters, and of looking with an eye undimmed by prejudice or hereditary caste. We all have our favourite poets, our favourite painters, our greatest musicians and our ideal warriors. In one room, half a dozen different men of genius will be pronounced the greatest of all poets, the greatest of all painters and composers, the king of warriors. So, in this matter, a Bhuddist will name Bhudda; a Parsee will say Zoroaster; a Mahommedan will say Mahomet; a Christian

will say Jesus; and a Jew will mention the author of the Pentateuch. But what value can there be to those answers? One, or more than one of them, may be true, but it is probable that in each case the name is suggested by the traditions of the speaker. If they were perfectly free, they might answer otherwise, but the Bhuddist mentions his founder, because he was taught that he was the only begotten of God. The Mahomedan mentions Mahomet, because he has learnt that Mahomet was God's chief prophet. The Christian mentions Jesus, because his creed states that he was the only son of God, and the Hebrew refers to Moses, because all his life he has heard the words "there was no prophet like unto Moses." The difficulty of impartial criticism is further enhanced by the fear in a man's soul of being falsely charged. If a Bhuddist were to say Mahomet, or a Jew mentioned Bhudda, and the Christian said Moses, it would be supposed that they had changed their faiths, and their own co-religionists might declare them, without further reason, to be renegades and apostates. These are grave charges, and very few intellects are so constituted as to be impervious to a charge of that nature. Hence some defence, must be given for the stereotyped replies, on the ground that a man may, pardonably, fear to utter a conviction which is calculated to attribute to him a conviction which he does not hold. There can be little doubt that the dread in men's minds of being misunderstood is so terrible that they will be silent rather than risk exposure to the charge of disloyalty and apostacy. If we can suppose the phenomenon of an earnest Christian and a devout Jew setting aside every trammel of hereditary preconception, we might hear an impartial answer to the familiar question, "What think ye of Christ?" An answer that had no taint

of bias, undergoing as the question ought, an examination *as a true man* of science would conduct the operation of an anatomical examination. An Englishman whose mind is a blank in relation to Christian theology, but whose experience and study have made him intimate with the result of Christian teaching, in all its aspects—what must *he* think of Christ? Maintaining that the chief factor in civilization is the religious idea, that is, the parental relation of the Supreme being to mankind, first and foremost he regards the sense of human brotherhood as the highest aim for civilized men, because it signifies perfect relations between man and man—it implies the realization of the best hopes of political progress, namely, liberty, fraternity, and equality of opportunity; it means the effacement of that one dread enemy which has betrayed our social institutions in every age; human intolerance—he regards the recognition of this doctrine of human brotherhood by mankind, as the consummation of all that is best and greatest in history, and, therefore, any name, which is more or less associated with that development, is more or less great, in proportion to the force of its influence.

Now there are two tastes of human character which may both arrive at the same result, but their difference lies in the source of their action. Two men are pursuing a course of life, equally noble and equally beneficial in effect, but the latter proceeds from the influence of another, and the former acts from abstract doctrine. This, perhaps, is a fairly exact description of the ethical difference between a good Jew and a good Christian. The Christian who is highly gifted with moral perception and whose life is blameless, owes his moral wealth and spiritual endowment to the direct and continued influence of a certain person-

ality without whom he would say that he could enjoy little moral possession and no spiritual treasure. Now the Jew whose moral constitution and spiritual training produces the self-same conduct and results, goes through life without a thought of any one of his side, or even a hero of history, to direct him. Whatever is best and purest in his composition is the direct and sole effect of an abstract teaching, which he calls his religion. But for the sparse population of professed Israelites on the face of Europe, we might be induced to believe that the phenomenon of a completely religious life can only be the result of a personal influence; and we may still infer that so far as Europe is concerned, barring the handful of Jewish people who make the exception, the phenomenon of a completely religious life does not exist, without the personal influence for its cause. We know of no instance in European Society of any group of men who exhibit a lofty religious tone and who, at the same time, are not, in some sense or another, the disciples of a great personal influence, except the case of the people professing the Jewish religion. For, if we examine the philosophy of such writers as are known to hold themselves outside the Communion of Christian churches, we still find in their writings and in their conversations, some words which support the proposition that they are led in their moral endeavours by the recollection and the force of some one personality. The measure of moral and spiritual culture is only determined by the extent to which that personal influence is paramount, even with those whom Theologians call all kinds of names, who profess no theology at all. Frequently I have heard men, in England and Germany, who consider themselves as far removed from the creeds of any Christian church, as a Bhuddist or Parsee, grasp the name of the one personality,

whenever they were attempting to illustrate the best side of human nature. Now, this extraordinary state of things, that none but Jews are free from personal direction in the matter of religion and morals, and that all Europeans who are not Jews and who hold vastly different views of life and philosophy, cling to the same influence, opens up two interesting questions: first, as to that one personality which, for so long and so profoundly holds this sway over human thought. "What think ye of Christ?" and again, as to the fact that only one group of people seem independent of his influence in religion, namely, the Jews: they being of the race and religion of that same personality. "What think ye of Judaism?" When I venture to say that it is not possible to reply amply to the one question without asking the other, I am sensible that the reader may impulsively suspect that the writer of this Article, at least, is not in that fortunate state of freedom from creed or race influence to conduct the examination in the manner he prescribed. But I may here submit that, difficult as it is to secure a free critic, the difficulty is augmented by the necessity that a person of the race and religion of Christ is wanted to answer the question in all its breadth and significance, because it is doubtful whether, in all Europe, there is a thinker, not a Jew, who has at his command those instruments of inquiry which are needful, who knows from the interior experience the exact effect of a religion which the misfortunes of two thousand years have rendered the most exclusive, who can gain access to those avenues of reflection, upon a topic which has been debated, in closed doors and in a dead language, and from which the eye of cultured Gentiles has been more or less blindfolded since the gloomy days of Herod, and who, therefore, have been unable to inspect the advance, the refinement, the

growth of nineteen centuries, among a people so gifted with the genius of religious perception. The claim of the Hebrew race to take the first rank among the contributors to human progress, is established by the fact that to them it was pre-eminently given to teach mankind God, and give morality to the world, inasmuch as they first learned the doctrine of the parental relation of the Supreme Being to mankind, and that their literature and their history have placed that idea, above any other, and, moreover, that in their own sons they have produced the most powerful teachers of that doctrine, places beyond the province of discussion the truth declared in the Pentateuch, "Ye shall be unto Me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation." Ex. XIX., v. 6, or as expressed by the Second Isaiah, "Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord." Isa. XLIII., v. 10. We may leave the subject of the position of the Jews in relation to the world and pass on to consider the most renowned product of their race and doctrine, and thus debate the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

In dealing with this name, I am deeply sensible of the sacred ground on which I touch, and, therefore, of the reverence and the delicacy which its treatment demands, for the simple reason that I know full well that, to the mass of my fellow-countrymen at least, that name holds a place unique for its sanctity and isolated for its veneration. Also because I am equally conscious that the exact point of view from which I regard it differs from that which my best friends hold, and differs in kind to their thinking, even more vitally than it might appear to my own mind. So far as it is impossible to cast off the influences of my own antecedents and which, for the purpose of this paper, it may be best that I cannot so I would venture to describe the two positions in these words. In the one case, that of

the vast Christian majority, the name stands forth as the single truth, with all that is greatest and holiest. To myself it presents itself as the one exponent of the Ancient Faith. who, from circumstances which I am about to explain, was the single Israelite who succeeded in delivering to the world at large that old faith of which his race was destined to be the missionaries. To Jews, who may differ from these definitions I would say that our Ten Commandments and our Psalms, which they all rejoice to see occupy a prominent place in Christian profession, do so only in consequence of their connection with the name of Christ, and because he reiterated them. And to Christians who take exception, I would reply that no Jew could remain within the pale of the Jewish religion who, did not admit that 'on these two great commandments hang the Law and the Prophets.' "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang the Law and the Prophets." Matthew XIII., verses 37, 38, 39, 40. The rite of circumcision would not counteract the disqualification to be of the Jewish religion for any born Jew who denied that other definition of his old Faith, so conspicuously imported into Gentile teaching, when in answer to the question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life." Jesus said, "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." He said unto him, "which?" Jesus said, "Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honor thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Matthew XIX, v. 16, 17, 18 and 19. These several citations of the 20th

Chap. of Exodus, the 19th Leviticus v. 18, and Deut. 6, v. 5, recalling, as they do, to the Israelite of all ages and of every clime, the inmost sanctuary of his religion, words so familiar to him that they have been incorporated into his prayer-book and constitute, as it were, the very "canon" of his public worship and of his daily and dying confession, it must be to him the subject of solemn gratitude that, by what means so ever, these words have at last found their way and travelled outside the boundary of the synagogue and after 18 centuries become the corner-stone of Western civilization. The Jew, who does not recognize this, renounces, whether he knows it or not, his personal identity with the band of missionaries who carried the treasured Ark through the wilderness, he repudiates the charge given him through his ancestors, at the foot of Sinai, and misses the whole scheme of his racial history and the true genius of his Judaism.*

Here again I am confronted with two kinds of antagonists, namely the Christian who renounces these statements of what Christ taught, asserting that they do not represent the completeness of Christianity, and the Jew who might refuse to recognize the identity of the teaching of Christ with the Jewish religion, contending that Christianity contains much else which is positively the denial of Judaism, and even hostile to it. It is unnecessary to consider here other objections which issue

* "It is incumbent upon us throughout all generations, to consider, as if we, personally, had gone forth from Egypt, as it is written, "And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, this is done, because of that which the Lord did for me, when I came forth from Egypt." Not only did the Supreme Being deliver our fathers but also us as it is written.

Thus, are we in duty bound to thank and praise Thee, O Lord our God, for having performed to our fathers and to us, all these miracles. Thou hast brought us from slavery to freedom, Thou hast changed our Sorrow into Joy, and our darkness into a great light. We will therefore sing before Thee,—Hallelujah !

(Passover Service, 1st night.)

This has no other meaning to the Jews of the present day except as the Statement of the Missionary character of their Race."

from the conviction on the part of Jews, that the very name, Christianity, represents and is the cause of 1800 years of persecutions, stakes and massacres, and is, even at this very time, the actual tyrant of half the Jewish race. Whilst understanding that attitude towards the subject; yet, for the purpose of a strictly philosophical inquiry, it is imperative that we should separate the class of criticism which is philosophical and calm, from that which is the consequence of a righteous indignation, but which has sometimes culminated in a passionate resentment. We have, in such instances, the illustration of harm done to a scientific investigation, by permitting it to be tampered with by political and social estrangements, or by the influence of race, prejudice and ignorance. It is enough then to dispose of the two classes of objections, without considering others which dim the sight and mar the judgment.

With regard then to the latter kind of antagonism, we must give much the same answer, as we should, to the former, and say that the history of the religion of Christ, with all its consequent events and revolutions, compels the conviction that a clear line of demarcation must be drawn between, what we may be disposed to call, two Christianities. In the face of statements from equally recognized spokesmen of "Christianity" which, to one, who is not a Christian, seem to convey the exact opposite of each other, and to those who are Christians, do literally precipitate open divergence and mutual protests, how is it possible to resist the belief that much that has grown up since the first century of the Christian era, and is taught in that name, is not the same as that which is read in the Gospels, nor, indeed, is it the natural consequence of that wondrous life and personality which is still held to be the central

figure, in both cases. When we read, on the one hand, that the condition of eternal life is to keep the commandments and be charitable; and on the other, we are told, not in that volume, but in the volumes of ecclesiastical superstructure, that mere morality will not get you to heaven, but that the hope rests on quite other conditions, that is mental assent to propositions which we do not even read in the New Testament or the Old, but which, at most, are interpretations of what is written there, there is no escape from the conclusion that the teaching of the Gospel is one thing, and the teaching of churches is another. I do not dispute that the teaching of the churches profess, and do recapitulate, something of the lesson of that great life; but, a comparison between the life itself, as it was lived, and the words, as they were written, and the spectacle of ecclesiastical assumption and Church canons, shows a difference almost amounting to contradiction. It may be in place to give some illustrations of that difference. Now, in the matter of the immortality of the soul, which is an axiom in the Jewish religion, an inseparable part of the doctrine of the affinity between God and man, Genesis I. v. 27., "So God created man in his own image," as much assumed throughout the sacred writings as the very existence of the Deity, which, be it remembered, was never enunciated as a proposition in the Pentateuch, but always assumed as the foundation of every other proposition. Hence, "I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, thou shalt have no other Gods before Me," Ex. XX. 2. 3. The Jews have ever held the first of the Ten Commandments to be the declaration of the *Providence* of God, not the announcement of His being—and No. 2, is the prohibition of idolatry, commencing with the words, "thou shalt have no other

Gods before Me." Christianity has proclaimed the immortality of the soul in a manner which, to those who are unacquainted with Judaism, appears to be a new revelation, and all Christian teachers have used language respecting it, which makes it appear as the crucial test of the Christian religion. Yet, what are the conditions that guarantee eternal bliss according to the churches, and what are they according to the message of Jesus himself? The creeds of the Latin and Greek Churches and the Thirty-nine Articles of the modern English Church, and the preaching of the three Priesthoods, substitute acquiescence with certain dogmas, more or less metaphysical, for that simple and sublime consideration which is gathered from the memorable parable, in the XXV. Chapter of Matthew, evidently inspired by the Founder himself. Here we read a minute description of perfect charity, holy unselfishness, human brotherhood, large sympathy and boundless care for others—elevating the poorest and the greatest sufferers into the highest region of moral worth, and placing thereon a sanctity and a blessing which is to be the equivalent of serving God, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me," Matthew XXV., v. 40. And again, "Inasmuch as ye did not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." 45. And what was this doing? "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick and ye visited me, I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee, or when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee?" Matthew XXV., 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39, and the

King shall answer and say unto them, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." v. 40. Not one word is found in the text about belief or observance, or conformity to ritual ordinance. It is the plain and majestic description of a perfect social economy, based on the religion of the parental relation of the Supreme Being to the human family.

There is an utter incompatibility between this Christianity and the Christianity which, age after age, has burnt heretics and denounced nonconformists. There is an incongruity between that divine philosophy and the more recent growth of human pride and sacerdotal assumption. The resemblance is as undiscernable as any affinity which could be discovered between black and white. How does that parable read to the Jew? and how does it read to the Christian of this century? To the Christian it is part of a grand revelation which is only unveiled when it is thought fit to raise the curtain, or indeed, after unspeakable mental struggle, the thinker has disclosed it for himself. To the Jew it is the old familiar expression which has rung in every note of his domestic life for 3000 years and more, and which is the very essence of his traditional teaching and practice which is incorporated even into the ceremonial part of his hereditary observance*

* "These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations which ye shall proclaim in their seasons." Leviticus XXIII. v 4. "Three times a year shall your males appear before the Lord—in the Feast of Unleavened Bread—Feast of Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles. And they shall not appear before the Lord empty, every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee." Deut. XVI, 16, 17. "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, thy son, daughter, man-servant, maid-servant and the Levite and the stranger, and the fatherless, the widow and the Levite because he hath no part with thee, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow which are within thy gates shall come and shall eat and shall be satisfied, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest." Deut. XIV. 29. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother.

Thou shalt not be grieved when thou givest. Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, and to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land." Deut. XV. 7, 11. This is the portion of the Law read on the 8th day of Solemn Assembly in every Synagogue throughout the world.

“ And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him, but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be as one born among you and thou shalt love him as thyself.” Leviticus XIX, 33, 34, and again, Isaiah LV. 1. “ Oh ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, buy wine and milk without money and without price. For mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.” Whoever is acquainted with the poor of the Jewish community, will perceive that the self-denial and the giving of alms is practised to an extent that is sometimes startling, when we consider their worldly condition which is equivalent only to a class of the general community, just one stratum above the lowest, and they are people, who for the most part are strictly “ orthodox ” in all outward observances and have never read the New Testament and know nothing of Christ, except that he was an illustrious Jew, and the founder of the Christian religion. There we see precisely the kind of unselfishness and tender consideration of others, without distinction of creed or race. which in the remarkable chapter of Matthew is declared to determine eternal happiness.

The limit of space forbids an exhaustive comparison between the words of Jesus which are found scattered in fragments throughout each Gospel, and those of the Hebrew prophets and the Rabbinical fathers. The only purpose of such comparison would be to show the kind of Israelite that Jesus was and the sort of influences which moulded his character. Unlike many schools of Hebrew thought, there was little attraction in his mind in Rabbinical subtleties, except in so far as they bore directly and practically upon the spiritual side of life. It was the higher Judaism, in preference to legal traditions and outward

observances and forms, with which his soul was saturated. It was because he saw in that higher Judaism the one religion for all men and because it presented to his view no essential barrier that should rail it off from the gaze of the outside world, that he was so well fitted to be the one of his race and faith who should hold up, to the outer world, those divine truths which made him a "light to the Gentiles" and, at the same time, "the glory of his own people Israel." (Nunc Dimitis) St. Luke. Can any student wonder that such a figure as this, whose character was of superb grandeur and ideal purity, whose work in history has been so precious in itself and so immeasurable in its consequences, should be misunderstood? Aye! misunderstood by those who have professed to follow him these 19 centuries, as well as by the ignorant mob who filled the passes before Calvary, and that arrogant priesthood and Hebrew aristocracy he was there to reform. Looking at his life, at a distance of all these centuries, with the light of history turned upon him in all its blaze, he is yet misjudged, in a thousand ways, by Jew and Gentile alike. Successive generations may yet have to pass before even cultured Europe can make a true estimate of his life, or his worth.

Nineteen hundred years ago, there was a small nation, having its own autonomy but subject to a powerful empire, with instincts of pride, on the one hand, arising from the consciousness of its innate, superiority over their pagan rulers. Unconsciously, perhaps, that national pulse was beating with emotion at its chequered career, seeing that it was charged with the weightiest mission to men that was ever a nation's lot, and yet falling short, from time to time, of its divine charge, jealous of its hereditary treasures, anxiously guarding the sacred trust and trembling before

the incalculable foes which stood in its near future. Detesting, from its very soul, the pagan idolatry around it, it was jealous of its greatest luminaries. Like all other histories, around its best thoughts and highest gifts grew the arrogance of human pride and sacerdotal assumption, as well as its plague of class distinctions and exclusions. And it was, at that time, filled with sects and controversialists. The best of these was gifted with a leader who embodied the highest spiritual genius of his race and traditions, and the most orthodox Jew may regard him as the hero of his race.

Thrilled with enthusiasm for that one religious thought, the parental relation of the Supreme Being to the human family, seeing, as he did, the inevitable human brotherhood as its outcome, he was impatient at the slow progress of history and, in many cases, the deadness to the actual truths of Judaism. The best thinkers of this enlightened age are often impatient from the same cause, how much more so a genius who would have been foremost in the ranks of men to-day, but whose career was set in the world, 1900 years ago. We often say of a great man, "he lives in advance of his time." It is not too much to say of Jesus, that if he lived now, he would still be in advance of the age, seeing how far from attainment is the essence of his teaching and the mission of his life, among those very nations whose political or social systems have been Christian in name for a thousand years. And if he could revisit the earth now, so far from unqualified satisfaction at the progress of his works, carried on after him, in his name, we can imagine his tearful disappointment and the sorrow of his great soul, to observe that political liberty is only a thing of yesterday, and that religious enmity is still rampant in the most Christian countries of Europe. He would find, indeed, among individuals, numerous dis-

ciples after his own heart, but it is impossible to resist the reflection that he would go to look for them first, in the hospitals of our great cities and in the slums of our crowded thoroughfares where, indeed, he might find many noble women and Christian men, "going about doing good," as he did; but it is extremely doubtful whether it would occur to him to include, in his round, to the Gilded Chamber, in order to behold the successors of his apostles. He might certainly find his flock in the excellent work of many a well-ordered English diocese, but it would be rather at a Young Men's Christian Association, than in the Episcopal palace, and if he were told he could only find them in one Church, he would look aghast and would not be persuaded that they were not to be seen also in many a Gospel Hall and Mission House. In remote villages, he would be cheered to meet the toiler at the plough who, according to the light that is in him, spends his weekly holiday in seeking to spread as much truth as he knows. Painful as it was to him, in Judea, to listen to the Rabbinical hair-splitting and the controversies of the Pharisees, it is probable he would stand to-day much more aghast if he heard the language which one Christian uses of another; and he might be tempted to repeat "they cast out devils in my name." (Mark and Luke.) Looking for the evidence of the progress of that religion which he taught, is it likely that he would be best pleased if he were shown as evidence that, whereas when he died, there was no creed on record, now there are three; and that the latest development of these documents extends to a parchment roll, so long, that it contains no less than 39 Articles which very few people are able to understand? Looking upon Jesus with wrapt admiration for the perfection of his moral power, the breadth and tenderness of his human sympathy and the genius of his spiritual nature and regarding him as dis-

tinctly the greatest figure in human history, not because of what the Churches say about him, but through what is open to every candid reader, it is possible to imagine something of the flash of just indignation and surprise that would thrill his very being, if a Jew told him that he had heard it preached in a Christian temple, "Hell is paved with unbaptized infants," and "no unbaptized child can be saved." If he heard of the eagerness with which many of the poor rush with their infants to the font, through having been told that the eternal peace of the helpless little one is determined by this act, he would recollect his own tender words which made no reference to fonts: "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Matthew XIX., 14.

We can imagine the amazement with which he would be told that one half of Christendom, at least, regard the remote descendants of his own kinsmen, of the very worst of whom he only said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," with a hatred and treat with cruel bondage, for more bitter and actively wicked than that most ignorant mob ever perpetrated against himself, in the dark ages of Herod. If he were told that the vast Christian Empire, on the East side of Europe, oppressed and worried, with elaborate persecution, her millions of Jewish subjects—that other Christian States, in South Eastern Europe,* systematically violated treaties and disregarded the example and remonstrance of her better neighbours, in order to continue the most direful treatment of her 250,000 Jews who were good and faithful citizens, and whose families for ages had been true to the country of their birth,—that intellectual protestant Germany, indeed, the seat of "Christian" reform, made a cowardly "raid on a handful of men, instigated by a

* Lately the Kingdom of Roumania.

Court preacher and abetted by University professors." With these facts before him, it is doubtful whether he would pronounce all Europe, Christian, and whether the evidence of great pageants and elaborate ceremonials, though offered in his name, would influence his view "one tittle or one jot."

The question arises, how came it that, in spite of the pure teaching of Christ, so much sin and misery should have been offered to the world in his name? The truthful answer seems to be this — The task of introducing, into pagan societies, a religion which was eternal by reason of its permanent efficacy; Divine, on account of its intrinsic value and universal because of its boundless applicability. required states of some civilization to receive it. The very race who originally owned it, had to pass through the long training of a rigorous law, in order to be sufficiently disciplined to assimilate it, and the social soil into which, at the time of Christ, it was about to be sown, was not merely uncivilized, but it contained already, much that had to be uprooted, in order to make way for the higher truths. Idolatry was deeply rooted in the Western world. Whatever culture there was in Greece and Rome at that time, partook of the nature of those very subtleties of thought, which were discordant with the divine simplicity of the Hebrew Religion, a religion which appeared to be a miracle, because of its very purity. Whatever thoughts had so far crept in upon the human mind were all, more or less, mythical, and not within the easy apprehension of a child; though they possessed many poetic features. But the great boon of Judaism was that it set forth the truth of the Divine Being which, if philosophers tripped over, a child could understand. It was necessary for the growth of human brotherhood, to have one religion which, unlike Greek mythology and Egyptian idolatry, presented itself in an aspect which all nations could ultimately assimilate. The author or

authors of the Pentateuch had the same kind of difficulty in their day, that Christ had in his. He, however, adopted a different plan. Instead of suddenly setting forth a code of religion and morals which was far in advance of the mental culture of those whom it was intended to be the depositories of the new religion, he made no social revolution whatever; he took into his system the social institutions of the age, and thus we find, in the Levitical Law, what some people consider a divine sanction to the barbarous rites of that ancient sacrifice of blood. but which, in reality, it was only an appropriation for higher aims. Hence Moses left it to subsequent generations to emancipate Israel and mankind under the training of his higher religion, from the practice of those sacrificial observances. History has proved the expediency of the method, because the Jews have long since outgrown the barbarities of thinking they could please God by slaying cattle. Associating those rites with the permanent truth, that which is permanent remains, and the rites which were temporary have passed away and left no trace behind them, on the Jewish mind. The Jewish religion was, therefore, the direct means of elevation above the superstition of sanguinary sacrifice. The process being gradual, the effacement is lasting. So to-day, the mind of a Jew is as free from the thought of sacrificial rite, as if such rites had never entered into the system of the past, and he is left in a frame of mind which regards religion, entirely and only, upon its spiritual and its ethical basis. The nations who first became Christian had to pass through the same process of social regeneration which the Jews had undergone, but as they started 2000 years later, they are not yet rid of their crudities or superstitions or errors. However they have the advantage of living in later times and, therefore, the sacrificial idea does not take the grosser form which is described in Leviticus and by Homer.

It assumes the more refined garb of a metaphysical dogma. This is how we can account for the fact that so many Christians, even in our own day, find it difficult to dissociate the idea of religion from the thought of a sacrifice. It is often curious to a Jew of modern times, to be asked, by an apparently educated Christian, with eager interest, some question about a lamb on the first night of the Passover. I have frequently experienced a strange interest in observing the astonishment it excites, when I inform my questioner that, for nearly 2000 years, such a phenomenon as killing a lamb, or having any notion of blood, in connection with religious worship, has been unknown among Jews ; and that the tiny lamb bone, burnt in the fire and laid on a plate on the first night of Passover, is a mere historic memento and has no theological significance whatsoever.

There is every reason to believe that just as progress among the Jews has delivered them from some extraordinary superstitions, so, among Christians, the day of sacrifices is just waning. We find, indeed, that now the most advanced Christians are already free from that thought. The Broad Church movement and Christian Unitarianism appear to be a progressive development from the Reformation of the 16th Century, just as that was an advance on the earlier expressions of Christian theology. In the world of Letters, it is now an everyday occurrence to come in contact with persons of Christian birth, whose position in regard to Christ is, for all intents and purposes identical with that which I have ventured to indicate in this pamphlet.

Thus we may account for one of the two differences between the Church and the Synagogue as they appear to-day. The Church binds up, with the religion of Christ, the two doctrines of a Sacrifice, and the Fall of Man. In the Synagogue, those ideas have no place, therefore, it is the ethical religion of Christ alone which is in common

between the orthodox Christian and the orthodox Jew. The second, *i.e.*, the Fall of Man, or as it is called, the dogma of *original sin*, is of more vital difference than the former, because it must be admitted that, free as the Jew, for many centuries, has been from the notion of sacrificial rite, the idea did once have a place in Jewish theology, but there is no page in Jewish history, nor any word, escaped from the lips of a Hebrew theologian, to indicate the dogma of *original sin*. The story, in the book of Geneses, of Adam's disobedience, has never produced, upon the Jewish mind, any impression of significance (historical or otherwise) beyond the simple lesson of obedience, as taught to children. That distinguished contemporary of Spinoza, the famous Rabbi, Isaac Orobio De Castro of Amsterdam, wrote the most powerful denunciation of that doctrine, in his Dissertation on the Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah. And he stakes the whole issue between Christianity and Judaism upon the one Christian hypothesis of the hereditary sin of Adam. Most of the Rabbins seem to have disclaimed to treat the subject of original sin, so remote has it ever been from the Hebrew imagination. And, with all the learned commentaries, upon the text of Scripture which crowd Hebrew libraries in thousands of volumes, not one of them has interpreted a single passage in the Bible in a way to admit the idea, even as an hypothetical argument. One of the hardest problems for historical criticism is to account for the thought having entered at all into Christendom. One would have supposed that even those who believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures would find it an impossibility to formulate the dogma on scriptural authority, considering that the flood is said to have destroyed all the wicked, and that all nations are descended from the three pure sons of one just man (Noah). Indeed, the sentence upon Adam did not embody a clause about hereditary

already solved and how little remains open ?

In conclusion, slow as the search may be, the circumstance that it is possible for Jew and Christian to hold the same view about Christ and about religion, shows the unity of the religious idea, and when all the philosophers will combine to seek for an agreement about that one principle — the parental relation of the Supreme Being to the human family, it is certain that they will find it. We shall then have a common religion, attended by the infinite satisfaction that the huge and intricate struggle of the ages has taken place with the purpose of disentangling the simplest thread of human progress and the highest guarantee of 'civilization.' For it is evident that when that one great principle which I call religion is fully understood, it will work the most beneficial revolution that we have ever had. To philosophy, it will give a patent key, and to politics, it will inspire the highest motive. That statesman who works after the teaching of Christ will pursue a policy which will place patriotism and the rights of independent States in their proper relation to each other. In so far as we observe that such a policy has been the governing principle of a politician, he is entitled to be considered a Christian statesman. That party in the State which gives more pre-eminence to the common rights of men and works hardest for the cause of human liberty, is the party which must command itself to the best Christian. The country which, on the whole, offers the best securities for free institutions and the surest guarantee for the liberty of men, is the most Christian country. So that, with this practical view of the character of Christ, we can only consent to use the word *Christian* as an adjective when it can justly describe a nation, a statesman, a policy, a community, or a private citizen.

OSWALD JOHN SIMON,
London, 1886.

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